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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000392

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STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2016

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SUBJECT: CIVIL SOCIETY SEEKS TO ENGAGE THE POPULACE TO JOIN
THE PROTESTS

REF: LAGOS 368

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Classified By: Consul Alan B. C. Latimer for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: In a May 21 meeting with Poloff, Chairman of the Coalition for Democracy and Rule of Law (CODERL) and Pronaco Media and Publicity Director Wale Okunniyi discussed the election, Pronaco's proposed new constitution, and plans for future protests. Civil society organizations will participate in the sit-down protests planned for May 28-29, and are planning future protests to press for an overturn of the April election results. End summary.

Civil Society to Engage Populace in the Protests

12. (C) In a May 21 meeting, Chairman of CODERL Wale Okunniyi told Poloff that civil society would continue using protests to press for a negotiated transitional government and new elections. They had planned a series of sit-downs and street protests for May 28-29, which would encourage residents to show their displeasure by refusing economic activity and avoiding the inauguration festivities. Okunniyi said they would protest the incompetence and insincerity of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP).

13. (C) Civil society groups would not rely on the election tribunals for justice, but after the sit-down strike would meet to determine their next move. Although Poloff requested more details, Okunniyi replied while they have future plans now was not the time to divulge them. Asked how civil society would convince common traders to join the struggle, Okunniyi responded that civil society would sensitize the populace to join the protests by going to the people and asking them to sit down to make a short-term sacrifice for long-term economic and political gain. Okunniyi said they

would educate the populace about the current economic structure, which he characterized as a system designed largely to benefit the elite.

¶4. (C) When Poloff asked about the quality of the Lagos gubernatorial elections, Okunniyi responded that although the Lagos elections were not free of shortcomings and malpractices, because residents voted for Action Congress (AC) Governor-elect Babatunde Fashola the results represented the will of the people. This made them acceptable, Okunniyi stated.

Pronaco Unveils a Proposed Constitution

¶5. (C) Okunniyi, also Pronaco's Media and Publicity Director, eagerly discussed the new draft constitution, which Pronaco subsequently unveiled on May 22. Pronaco was founded in 2005 by the People's National Congress, a union of multiple ethnic interests and civil society groups which was formed in reaction to the National People's Reform Congress convened by President Obasanjo. As a result of the military-imposed constitution, Nigeria has a disconnect between its people and the government, particularly the federal government's failure to recognize ethnic aspirations, Okunniyi contended. The Pronaco constitution gives more power to the people to enforce their rights, which is not possible in the 1999 constitution. Chief Anthony Enahoro served as Pronaco Chairman and Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka was Deputy National Chairman. (Note: Soyinka was once very active in Pronaco. However, in his autobiography he criticized Enahoro's leadership and he did not attend Pronaco's press conference announcing the proposed constitution. End note)

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¶6. (C) The Pronaco constitution, designed to devolve more power to the states, created 18 regions based on ethnicity with provision for self-determination based on a plebiscite. Instead of the federal government taking a lion's share of revenues, the regions would take their share first at 50 percent, with 35 percent shared by all regions and 15 percent allocated to the federal government. Okunniyi explained to Poloff that this devolution would keep people from being repressed by the federal government, and the reduced national share would force people look into their own regions for wealth rather than rely on Abuja or the Niger Delta.

Comment

¶7. (C) Civil society in Lagos is filled with veterans of previous pro-democracy struggles, but for mass mobilization largely relies on the participation of the labor unions, whose ability to mobilize determines the success of any civil protest. While civil society is still attempting to rouse public ire against the elections, so far the police and military have successfully kept Lagos from mass disturbance. In addition, civil society has not convinced the populace to actively participate in the protests, as Lagosians largely welcomed the election of Fashola and have not been engaged in protest since then. The Pronaco constitution is useful as the expression of the aspirations of some groups, but those supporting the Pronaco constitution are political outsiders without the clout to make their aspirations a reality. End comment.

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